DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 351 312 SP 034 145

AUTHOR Otuya, Ebo
TITLE Alternative Teacher Certification--An Update. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-SP-91-6
PUB DATE Nov 92
CONTRACT RI88062015
NOTE 4p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Alternative Teacher Certification; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Knowledge Level; Teacher Education; *Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Shortage; *Teaching (Occupation); Teaching Skills
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

This digest reviews alternative certification on the basis of educational quality and the need to fill teacher shortages. Following a definition of traditional certification, the alternative certification route is described as a process designed to certify candidates who have subject-matter competencies, without going through formal teacher preparation. Several studies have yielded information on the relationship between teacher knowledge and instructional practice and presented concerns and advantages of alternative certification. Alternative certification programs vary by state and may be designed to achieve different goals and objectives. Some evaluative studies that compare traditional and alternative certification routes have yielded inconclusive results, which can have far-reaching policy implications for effective teaching and the quality of education. If subject-matter competency combined with pedagogical training is the determinant of effective instruction, then the traditional certification route is the most effective policy to assure education quality. However, if subject-matter competence without pedagogical training is equally determinant of effective instruction, then alternative certification is an equally viable policy. (Contains 23 references.) (LL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED351312

ERIC DIGEST

ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATION--AN UPDATE

by

Ebo Otuya

ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education
American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
One Dupont Circle, Suite 610
Washington, DC 20036-1186

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

SP034145

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ERIC®
NOVEMBER
1992

DIGEST

EDO-SP
91
6

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON TEACHER EDUCATION

Alternative Teacher Certification—An Update

Ebo Otuya

The search for an alternate route to certify teachers has generated ideological debates revolving around educational quality. Supporters of traditional teacher certification argue that to improve the quality of education it is imperative to ensure that both professional knowledge and subject-matter competency are grounded in a solid foundation of pedagogical training (Roth, 1986; Shulman, 1986, 1987; Watts, 1986; Kennedy, 1990).

Supporters of alternative certification maintain that talented candidates with subject-matter competency can improve educational quality by the application of in-depth subject-matter knowledge to teaching, without necessarily going through the traditional route (Lutz & Hutton, 1989). Beyond these two views, Zumwalt (1991) suggests that alternative certification programs are context-specific experiments designed to meet policy goals, such as attracting talented career changers or filling teacher shortages, but are not necessarily substitutes or competitors of traditional preparation. This Digest reviews alternative certification on the basis of educational quality and the need to fill teacher shortages.

Definitions

In most professions, competency requirements are established by a governing body to ensure that individuals meet minimum standards before they are allowed to practice. Over the last decade, there have been a growing number of policy changes in educational reform efforts and these changes have affected teacher certification requirements nationwide (Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1988). In the traditional route, the minimum competency evaluation for initial certification is contingent upon completion of a 4-year college degree program, comprised of academic and professional curricula, and the demonstration of competencies in subject-matter areas through performance on written examinations, as required by each state or school district (AACTE, 1991). To ensure that these requirements are met, national, state, and local regulatory agencies and accreditation bodies implement licensure and certification regulations as a means of educational quality control (AACTE, 1991; Wise, 1991).

The alternative certification process includes holding a bachelors degree in the subject to be taught; achieving a passing score on a certification test; undergoing brief, intensive teacher training; and completing a supervised teaching internship, after which certification is recommended by the employing school district. It generally is a process designed to certify candidates who have subject-matter competencies, without going through formal teacher preparation. Alternative certification programs are being experimented with in 39 states, with the general goals of attracting talented people and career changers to the teaching profession and averting teacher shortages where they exist. Feistritzer and Chester (1991) identified about 91 alternative routes to certification with varying programmatic characteristics.

Concerns and Advantages

The relationship between teacher knowledge and instructional practice has been examined by several studies (Gudmundsdottir & Shulman, 1987; Grossman, 1987; Carlson, 1990). Conclusions indicate that teachers with more explicit and organized knowledge tend to provide instruction that has conceptual connections, and appropriate and varied representations for active and meaningful student discussion, than do teachers with limited knowledge. Stein, Baxter, and Leinhardt (1990) also found that poorly organized teacher knowledge often leads to less effective instruction. Shulman (1986, 1987) and McDiarmid and Wilson (1991) concluded, in their separate studies, that subject-matter competence alone is inadequate for instruction because teaching requires the transformation of knowledge content into representations that enhance students' understanding and learning.

Therefore, alternatively certified teachers may lack adequate pedagogical skills, which are normally acquired from formal teacher training—skills that are relevant to effective teaching (McDiarmid & Wilson, 1991). Because teachers are certified from competency in subject-matter area, the knowledge base is weak and narrowly focused to the extent that it could limit the learning horizon of the students, and adversely affect the quality of the students' overall educational experiences (Ball & Wilson, 1990; Schram, Feiman-Nemser, & Ball, 1990; Kennedy, 1991). Alternative certification has been perceived by some as an attempt to undermine the credibility, as well as the professionalization, of teaching (Zumwalt, 1991).

However, alternative certification programs do attract talented and experienced individuals to the teaching profession, especially in critically needed areas of subject matter where shortages exist (Lutz & Hutton, 1989; Shulman, 1992). Feistritzer and Chester (1991) indicate that more than 200,000 teachers have been licensed through alternative certification programs between 1985 and 1990. This represents an average growth rate of 20% or 4,000 additional teachers per year. Alternative certification encourages diversity in the classroom, which encourages role modeling and promotes learning by drawing relevant experiences from the children's backgrounds to enhance their cognitive development (Buechler, 1992). Alternative certification represents an expansion of roles played by the states and school districts in the decision-making

SP034145

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION
One Dupont Circle • Suite 610 • Washington, DC 20036-1186

process that affects the quality of education students receive (Natriello, 1992).

Evaluation Results

The measure of alternative certification program effectiveness depends on the quality of teachers and of students taught by these teachers. While the body of literature in alternative certification is descriptive of programs, there is little substance in critical evaluation. Although educators and measurement experts do not agree on universal effective measures of teacher ability and the quality of student learning, performance on standardized tests (NTE for teachers and SAT/ACT for students) is most widely used.

Research comparing the effectiveness of traditional and alternative certification teachers has rather mixed results. Lutz and Hutton (1989) evaluated the Dallas Independent School District's alternative certification program and found that alternative certificants scored high or higher on standard measures of teaching ability/performance and were rated high or higher by principals/mentors than were traditionally prepared teachers. Schram, Feiman-Nemser, and Ball (1990) did not find any significant difference between the two groups. Ball and Wilson (1990) found that subject-matter knowledge of new teachers, whether certified through an alternative or traditional route, was inadequate for effective instruction. Goebel, Ronacher, and Sanchez (1989) found that students taught by teachers prepared in an alternative certification program in Houston achieved as well as those students taught by traditionally prepared teachers.

Conclusion

Alternative teacher certification programs vary by state and may be designed to achieve different goals and objectives. Some evaluative studies that compare traditional and alternative certification routes have yielded inconclusive results, which can have far-reaching policy implications for effective teaching and the quality of education. If subject-matter competency combined with pedagogical training is the determinant of effective instruction, then the traditional certification route is the most effective policy to assure educational quality. However, if subject-matter competency without pedagogical training is equally determinant of effective instruction, then alternative certification is equally a viable policy. The question of whether those traditionally trained or those alternatively certified are the most qualified to teach may remain unanswered for several years to come.

References

References identified with an EJ or ED number have been abstracted and are in the ERIC database. Journal articles (EJ) should be available at most research libraries; documents (ED) are available in ERIC microfiche collections at more than 700 locations. Documents can also be ordered through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service: (800) 443-ERIC. For more information contact the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036-1186; (202) 293-2450.

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). (1991). *Teacher education policy in the states: A 50-state survey of legislative and administrative actions*. Washington, DC: Author. ED 337456

Ball D. L., & Wilson, S. M. (1990). *Knowing the subject and learning to teach it: Examining assumptions about becoming a mathematics teacher*. (Research Report 90-7). East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Education. ED 232207

Buechler, M. (1992). *Alternative certification for teachers. Policy Bulletin, 17*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Education Policy Center.

Carlson, W. (1990, April). *Saying what you know in the science laboratory*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, MA.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Berry, B. (1988). *The evolution of teacher policy*. Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation. ED 298599

Feistritzer, E., & Chester, D. (1991). *Alternative teacher certification: A state-by-state analysis*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Information.

Goebel, S. D., Ronacher, K., & Sanchez, K. (1989). *Alternative certification program, 1988-1989*. Houston, TX: Houston Independent School District, Department of Research and Evaluation. ED 322103.

Grossman, P. (1987, April). *A tale of two cities: The role of subject matter orientation in teaching*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC.

Gudmundsdottir, S., & Shulman, L. (1987). Pedagogical content knowledge in social studies. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 31*(2), 59-70. EJ 365478

Kennedy, M. (1990). *A survey of recent literature on teachers' subject matter knowledge*. East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Education.

Kennedy, M. (1991). Some surprising findings on how teachers learn to teach. *Educational Leadership, 49*(3), 14-17. EJ 435737

Lutz, F. W., & Hutton, J. B. (1989). Alternative teacher certification: Its policy implications for classroom and personnel practice. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 11*(3), 237-254. EJ 406345

McDiarmid, G. W., & Wilson, S. M. (1991). An exploration of the subject matter knowledge of alternative route teachers: Can we assume they know their subject? *Journal of Teacher Education, 42*(2), 93-103. EJ 430622

Natriello, G. (1992). Toward the strategic use of alternative routes to teaching. *Policy Briefs, 17*, 7-8.

Roth, R. A. (1986). Emergency certificates, misassignment of teachers, and other "dirty little secrets." *Phi Delta Kappan, 67*(10), 725-727. EJ 345227

Schram, P., Feiman-Nemser, S., & Ball, D. (1990). *Thinking about teaching subtraction with regrouping: A comparison of beginning and experienced teachers' responses to textbooks*. (Research Report 89-5). East Lansing, MI: National Center for Research on Teacher Education. ED 322134

Shulman, D. (1992). Alternative to certification: Are we on the right track?' *Policy Briefs, 17*, 6-7.

Shulman, L. S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(2), 4-14. EJ 330821

Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review, 57*(1), 1-22. EJ 351846

Stein, M. K., Baxter, J., & Leinhardt, G. (1990). Subject-matter knowledge and elementary instruction: A case from functions and graphing. American *Educational Research Journal, 27*(4), 639-663. EJ 422168

Watts, D. (1986). Alternative routes to teacher certification: A dangerous trend. *Action in Teacher Education, 8*(2), 25-29. EJ 339549

Wise, A. E. (1991). We need more than a redesign. *Educational Leadership, 49*(3), 7. EJ 435735

Zumwalt, K. (1991). Alternative routes to teaching: Three alternative approaches. *Journal of Teacher Education, 42*(2), 83-92. EJ 430621

The Clearinghouse thanks Barbara Holmes for her contribution to the development of this Digest.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education
Mary E. Dilworth, Director
Judy A. Beck, Associate Director
Ebo Otuya, Howard University

This Digest is in the public domain and may be reproduced.

OERI This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education, under contract number RI 88062015. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department.

ERIC Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a nationwide information system initiated in 1966. It is funded by the U. S. Department of Education. ERIC is the largest and most frequently used education database in the world.